

## Transportation, Community, and System Preservation Program (TCSP)

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### PROGRAM FY 2012 GRANT APPLICATION

#### PART A. PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title:	Fulton Mall and Mariposa Mall street reconstruction
Project Location (Include City/County, State):	City of Fresno, County of Fresno, California
State Priority (to be completed by State DOT):	
<b>GRANTEE CONTACT INFORMATION</b>	
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CONGRESSIONAL INFORMATION				
Congress Member:	Jim Costa			
Congressional District No.:	CA-20			
TCSP Program Funds:	\$4,000,000.00			
Matching Funds/In-kind Services Value:	\$1,000,000.00			
Matching Funds/In-kind Services Source:	Measure C (countywide self-help transportation sales tax)			
Total TCSP-Related Project Costs:	\$5,000,000.00			
TO BE COMPLETED BY THE FHWA DIVISION OFFICE				
State Administered?		Yes		No
Division Administered?		Yes		No
“Transfer” TCSP funding for Project Administration?		Yes		No
If yes, which Federal Agency				
Will the project be obligated by September 30, 2012?		Yes	X	No
Date grant application approved by FHWA Division Office				

## Part B. Project Abstract

Implementation of the City of Fresno’s *Fulton Corridor Specific Plan* for the revitalization of Downtown Fresno revolves around the future of the Fulton Mall, the original “Main Street” that the City made a pedestrian mall in 1964. TCSP funds will support preliminary engineering through reconstruction of a central, four-block section of Fulton’s public right-of-way. The project will ensure that the street grid surrounding the future High-Speed Train (HST) station provides access to the station while supporting community and economic development in the core of Downtown Fresno. This is a complete project with independent utility, but it is also part of a larger effort to reconstruct approximately twelve blocks of the street grid in the HST station area that have been closed to vehicle traffic for over 47 years.

## Part C. Project Narrative

**Description.** The project is the reconstruction of four blocks of streets in the heart of Downtown Fresno, including lighting and bicycle and pedestrian improvements. The project is located on the Fulton Mall between Fresno and Tulare Streets (approx. 880 feet), and the two blocks of Mariposa Mall between Van Ness Avenue and Broadway Plaza (approx. 720 feet) that intersect Fulton at its midpoint. These streets have been closed to vehicle traffic since 1964. TCSP funds will support all phases of the project, from preliminary engineering through reconstruction.

**Timeframe.** The activities proposed are expected to commence in early 2013.

**Goals.** The project sits at the heart of the City's major ongoing downtown planning effort, the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan. A primary goal of the Specific Plan, and in particular of this project as a Plan implementation measure, is to resuscitate the economy of what was once the "Main Street" for Fresno and the surrounding four-county area. The area's 1.6 million residents today are unserved by a vibrant, healthy urban center anywhere in the region, and the desirability of the entire region is hindered by the lack of this amenity. The economic impacts of downtown revitalization therefore extend well beyond the streets affected and the Downtown area alone. Downtown revitalization is now the City of Fresno's core economic development strategy.

**Transportation, community, and system preservation.** Mobility and connectivity play an important role in any downtown's economic vitality, and the lack of multimodal access has hurt the economy of Fulton Mall. While the vacancy in downtown historic buildings near the Mall is a high 35%, the vacancy rate in the historic buildings on Fulton Mall is an alarming 70%. There is demonstrated market demand for over 300,000 sq. ft. of new downtown retail, yet retail rent rates on Fulton Mall are well below the average for the city, and even for the rest of Downtown.

The restoration of the traffic grid on Fulton and its cross streets therefore addresses TCSP goal (4) to *provide efficient access to jobs, services, and centers of trade*, since Fulton Mall is a major jobs and trade center for the region. Studies for the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan estimate that a traditional street would improve retail sales along Fulton Mall by 143% within five years.

Two blocks to the west of Fulton, on Mariposa, the California High-Speed Rail Authority is planning to locate the nation's first High-Speed Train (HST) station. The proposed project represents an opportunity to (1) *improve the efficiency of the transportation system of the United States*, because the effectiveness of HST will depend on having both desirable destinations to connect, and stations that are easily accessible. Revitalizing Fulton and restoring the traffic patterns in the area address both of these needs — first by making investment and business more viable in the area around the station, and second by making the station itself more accessible.

The Fulton Corridor Specific Plan, which the proposed project will help to implement, is an effort to (5) *examine community development patterns and identify strategies to encourage private sector development*. One of the primary strategies in the Specific Plan to encourage investment and development is to revitalize the Fulton Mall through improvements to its form and function. Numerous private sector developers have identified circulation on Fulton and its cross streets as necessary for significant investment in the area.

**Priority consideration.** The proposed project meets all of the priority consideration criteria.

1. The Fulton Corridor Specific Plan, which this project will help to implement, is both a preservation plan and a transit-oriented development program. The Specific Plan makes the use of public resources more efficient by guiding investments in infrastructure (transportation and otherwise) toward areas where economic growth and building intensity are to occur. Fulton Mall is the site of Fresno's oldest and densest building stock, and the Specific Plan prioritizes public and private investment there.
2. The City of Fresno is in the process of creating and implementing policies to better guide the growth of the city overall. The City is now updating its General Plan as well as pursuing adoption of a Specific Plan for the Southeast Growth Area, both with the goal of limiting outward expansion and ensuring that all new development supports transit connectivity.
3. Ultimately it is city growth patterns that will most determine the impact that transportation activities within the urbanized area have on the environment. The Fulton Corridor Specific Plan represents an effort by the City to redirect growth and investment inward toward the historic center of Fresno, instead of continuing the trend of unchecked outward expansion.
4. The project is part of a larger development program, outlined in the Specific Plan, which has benefited from input from private sector investors and the community at large. The City is also involving adjacent property owners and the local arts community in planning for further improvements to the public realm in the immediate area of this project.
5. The primary goal of the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan, including remaking Fulton Mall, is to encourage private sector investment in Downtown Fresno. The board of PBID Partners of Downtown Fresno, the organization that includes all area property owners, voted in October to support implementation of this project as proposed in this application. As noted above, the project would improve retail sales along Fulton Mall by an estimated 143% within five years.

**Project selection criteria.**

**Livability.** The proposed project addresses the six livability principles as follows:

1. **Provide more transportation choices.** The project introduces complete street improvements on Fulton Mall and Mariposa Mall, with approximately half the 80-foot right-of-way dedicated to automobiles and bicycles, and half to pedestrians, including lighting and other systems to benefit all modes. The project improves street connectivity and supports the greater utilization of alternate transportation modes by reopening streets that connect the HST station, Bus Rapid Transit terminal, and Greyhound bus station to the rest of downtown.
2. **Promote equitable, affordable housing.** In conversations with City officials, investors such as housing developers have consistently indicated that restored circulation on Fulton Mall is a necessary precondition for the substantial development of housing in this area.
3. **Enhance economic competitiveness.** The Fulton Mall is not economically competitive today. For example, one chain retailer's Fulton Mall store generates only half the sales per square foot of other, identical Fresno stores serving like demographics. The lack of a vibrant, healthy urban center affects all 1.6 million residents of the four-county Fresno area, making the region as a whole less economically competitive. A vibrant downtown is key to retaining talented workers as well as preserving farmland that allows the area's chief industry to thrive.
4. **Support existing communities.** As shown in the accompanying map, five buildings on the Local Register of Historic Resources, including one also listed on the National Register of Historic Places, line the project site. The alarmingly high vacancy rates and low lease rates

in these buildings indicate that even the present population of daytime customers who do come to Fulton Mall could be better served by a more vibrant and active urban streetscape.

5. **Coordinate policies and leverage investment.** See “Leveraging” below.
6. **Value communities and neighborhoods.** Hundreds of area residents as well as investors participated in creating the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan. It is in the interest of the community that now uses Fulton Mall, and especially of the much larger community that presently does not, to improve the vitality of the Fresno area’s regional urban center.

**State of good repair.** Much of the infrastructure along Fulton Mall is in a decaying state. Improving the condition of facilities and systems through this project will minimize Fulton Mall’s life-cycle costs. Specific Plan analysis has shown that the current Fulton Mall landscape has a 30-year operations and maintenance cost of approximately \$7.8 million, roughly double the 30-year cost for a traditional street of \$3.7–4.2 million.

**Expeditious completion.** The funds requested will allow the project to move forward once environmental analyses are certified. The City has begun conversations with stakeholders about minimizing impacts to businesses during the construction period.

**Leveraging of private or other public funding.** Physically and figuratively, this project lies at the heart of a broad, City-led effort to lift the economy of the Fresno region by revitalizing its downtown. While the project is important on its own merits, and has independent utility, it also brings together millions of dollars in other public and private investment being made in the area. These activities include HST station and rail line construction under the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CSHRA) with Federal Railroad Administration funding; technical assistance from CSHRA and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on programming the HST station area; investments by the Federal Transit Administration in a Bus Rapid Transit system with a terminal near Fulton Mall and the HST station; Community Development Block Grant funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for creation of the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan; Fresno County Transportation Authority funding for infrastructure improvements; and proposed technical assistance on public realm design along Mariposa Mall from the National Endowment for the Arts and the American Architectural Foundation. As a *Strong Cities, Strong Communities* pilot city, Fresno’s revitalization effort is receiving full- and part-time assistance from numerous federal agencies and departments, including the Department of Transportation, with on-the-ground leadership from EPA and HUD. The proposed project is critical to achieving success in the effort that these resources are now aligned to support.

The City is also working actively with the owners of, or potential new investors in, at least half the properties that line the affected blocks of Fulton and Mariposa on recent and potential improvements to these buildings.

**National distribution.** Fresno is the 5<sup>th</sup>-largest city in California and the 34<sup>th</sup>-largest in the U.S., but it is the capital of a vast agricultural region whose counties consistently lead the nation in farm production. Downtown Fresno, with the corner of Fulton and Mariposa at its core, was historically the center of life for all residents in the central San Joaquin Valley. Improvements to the downtown economy and HST connectivity, which the proposed project supports, will once again serve both urban and rural residents from throughout the region.

## **Part D. Project Eligibility**

- a. The streets involved in the proposed project will be designated as minor collectors which are eligible for federal aid.
- b. The project is eligible for assistance under Section 217 of Title 23 of the U.S. Code because it proposes substantial pedestrian walkways, as well as measures for traffic calming to support bicycle-friendliness, as part of the “complete street” design for Fulton and Mariposa.
- c. The project is a corridor preservation activity necessary to implement transit-oriented development plans, traffic calming measures, or other coordinated transportation, community, and system preservation practices. As described in Part C above, the proposed project implements the top capital investment priority of the City’s Fulton Corridor Specific Plan, with the goals of improving street grid connectivity, community and economic development, and greater access to the nearby future High-Speed Train station.

The City of Fresno is a local government agency with substantial experience administering FHWA-funded projects. The City has the capability to meet the requirements of 49 CFR Part 18, including financial management standards and audits.

The City will also comply with all federal laws and regulations, including but not limited to the National Environmental Policy Act, National Historic Preservation Act, and U.S. DOT Act.